

of the Constitution, section II should be as well.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), the ranking member, my friend and colleague, for allowing me to control this part of the debate on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 7 is wrong for America. Allowing religious organizations to provide much-needed social services to disadvantaged people or people in need sounds like an innocent way to solve many of our problems. But the truth is that it allows these organizations to use Federal dollars, the taxpayers' dollars, to discriminate in their hiring. This is not right. It is not fair. It is not just.

I have spent more than 40 years of my life fighting against discrimination. We have worked too long and too hard, and we cannot sit back and watch the work of so many people who sacrificed so much be undone by this bill. We have come too far in this country to go back now. The House should not support a bill that allows the Government to promote discrimination, or return to the days when religious intolerance was permitted. It is not the right thing to do. It is not the right way to go. It is not the way to use the Tax Code.

Furthermore, this bill is an assault on the separation of church and State. This concept underlies our democracy. Yet H.R. 7 compels a citizen, through his tax dollars, to fund religious organizations. Tax dollars will go directly to churches, synagogues, and mosques. The wall between church and State must be solid. It must be strong. It has guided us for more than 200 years. It must not be breached for any reason.

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that there are many religious organizations and institutions providing much-needed services to our citizens. But as a government and as a Nation, we should not sanction religious discrimination or violate the separation of church and State. I urge my colleagues to vote against H.R. 7.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. CRANE), a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Prior to that, however, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) be allowed to manage the remainder of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. CRANE) is recognized for 2 minutes.

(Mr. CRANE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

We now have an excellent opportunity to advance sound tax policy and sound fiscal policy and sound social policy by returning to our Nation's historical emphasis on private activities and personal involvement in the well-being of our communities. Because the legislation we are considering contains a number of worthwhile provisions that I believe will help encourage people to give to charity, I rise today to express my support.

Mr. Speaker, I have long been an advocate in making changes in the Tax Code to encourage charitable giving. For many years, I have championed and sponsored some of the proposals contained in the legislation we have before us today, including the charitable IRA rollover and the deduction for nonitemizers. In fact, I do not believe there is a Member in Congress who has fought longer and harder for restoring a charitable deduction for nonitemizers than me. I have introduced the nonitemizer deduction legislation in every Congress since the 99th, and it is gratifying to finally see its inclusion in this legislation.

I would like to thank the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATTS) for including my provisions in H.R. 7, and the chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), for including it in the mark. While I am pleased that the nonitemizer deduction was included in H.R. 7, I am disappointed that the limitations on the amount of the deduction were set so low. I hope to be able to work with the chairman in the future to raise the limit up to the standard deduction.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), the Committee on Ways and Means ranking member.

(Mr. RANGEL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RANGEL. And now, my colleagues, we get to act two of this bill. And as was indicated by the chairman of the committee, while the tax provisions may not be unconstitutional, in my view they are unrealistic.

The President has seen fit to provide some \$84 billion to taxpayers in order to encourage them to do the right thing, to make charitable contributions. But there was no money to do that. So the leadership in the Committee on Ways and Means reduced the \$84 billion down to \$13 billion. Well, we cannot do much with that if we want to give incentives to those people who do not itemize. But in order to make certain that this size 12 foot fits into a size 6 shoe, they had to put a cap on the amount that a person could deduct.

Now, listen to this, because if you are a charity, you are in trouble. The cap on the amount of money that a taxpayer who does not itemize can give is \$25. Of course, if it is a married couple,

it increases dramatically to \$50. If an individual is in the 15 percent bracket, they will be able to get a return up to \$3.75. So much for a realistic incentive.

What we are trying to do with the \$13 billion is at least to pay for it, and we believe that the highest income people in this country can afford to pay for at least the \$13 billion that hopefully will be given to those people in our great society that are least able to take care of themselves. It should not be that we should have to give incentives. But if we have to do it, let us give those that can really work.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), a distinguished member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. PORTMAN. I thank my colleague and rise in strong support of this bill because it will help Americans who are most in need.

Over the past decade, Mr. Speaker, our Nation has enjoyed great prosperity, but it has not reached everybody. And the idea of this legislation is to try to reach people who have been left behind and to try to get at our very toughest social problems.

Some, including some I have heard earlier today, think the Government is the answer; that the Government is going to solve these problems. The Government can solve some of these problems; but we know from experience that when it comes to helping those most in need, there is no questioning the great success of community groups, of faith-based groups, of our churches, our synagogues, our temples reaching out to people. And not just helping them in their immediate need, but helping people help themselves by transforming lives. That is what this is all about.

Currently, government regulations often prohibit Federal assistance to support these institutions.

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That is a fact. That is what we are trying to break down. We have heard a lot of discussion today about how this raises concerns.

Opponents today have said it violates the separation of church and State. Not true. This bill strictly follows the boundaries that have been established over time by the Constitution and by numerous court decisions. These funds will not be used for religious purposes. These funds will be used to fund the good work that these groups are doing in our communities.

We have heard opponents say this bill threatens the independence of religious organizations. That is not true. First of all, it is entirely voluntary. No religious organization must partner with government to get these funds. Second, the legislation contains specific protections to prohibit the Federal government from interfering with the internal governance of the religious organizations.

We have heard opponents say this bill discriminates in employment. Not